

11507 Yates Street  
Silver Spring, Md. 20902  
October 5, 1969

Joshua Lederberg, Professor  
Genetics Department  
Stanford University Medical School  
Palo Alto, California

Dear Professor Lederberg:

For many months I have been wanting to write and tell you how much my husband and I enjoy your newspaper column. Now I am writing for a more serious reason.

No doubt you have been more than aware of the budget cuts made to NIH and HEW as a result of the present administration's economy drive. As a parent of a child in a research program which will eventually be affected by these cuts I am in despair. We live with the benefits of this research every day. Our little boy functions as a responsive human being because of this research, or due in large part to it.

Our Ben is one of the children in the study of Downs Syndrome now being conducted at Children's Hospital, Washington, D.C. I'm sure you are aware of this program. I do not believe there is a parent involved who is unrealistic enough to think that there is a cure for Mongolism. But we are seeing results that even a few years ago would have been thought impossible. Ben is a Trisomy 21, age two and three quarters years. He is walking, has been since his second birthday, has a vocabulary in excess of fifty words and has already proven to us, anyway, that he is capable of learning. His expression is normal, no tonguing except when tired. At birth, or shortly thereafter, he was so weak and flabby he could not turn his head from side to side and his tongue protruded constantly. We have given him a great deal of love and affection but we are convinced that were it not for the research program he would be nothing like he is today. Moreover, I feel that as significant as his life is for the joy he brings to us, his life may have untold significance for thousands of babies yet unborn. This is a great challenge to us - it truly makes life worth living.

To think that programs such as this - contributing to the betterment of mankind rather than to his destruction - can be cut off, finished, disbanded in the name of fiscal responsibility fills me with a hopelessness for this country that is almost intolerable. It seems to me that our government having once opened the doors of hope to children like our little son simply does not have the right to close those doors again in the name of economy. To do so is an act of unspeakable cruelty.

The parents in the program have been writing to senators and congressmen begging them to restore these funds. The proposed cut is to The Institute of Neurologic Diseases and Blindness, allocated through NIH as budgeted by HEW. I do not know whose ear you can bend but any good word you can pass along for this cause would be most appreciated. And I might add that it is not just this program I am concerned about. I feel this administration has a philosophy of misplaced priorities.

Sincerely,

*Mrs. Allen C. Trainer*